SHAKESPEARE
MADE EASY

A Midsummer Night's Dream

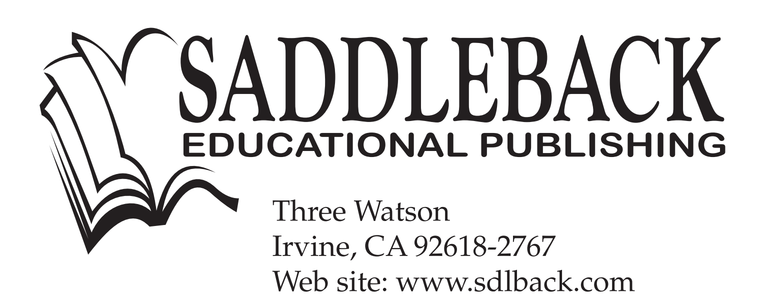


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SHAKESPEARE
MADE EASY
A Midsummer Night's Dream



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Contents



To the Teacher

As any teacher or student who has read Shakespeare knows, his plays are not easy. They are thought-provoking and complex texts that abound with romance, deceit, tragedy, comedy, revenge, and humanity shown at its very worst as well as its very best. In short, to read Shakespeare is to explore the depths and heights of humanity.

The *Shakespeare Made Easy* Activity Guides are designed by teachers for teachers to help students navigate this journey. Each guide is broken into six sections of four activities and one review. At the end of each guide is a final test, a variety of culminating activities, and an answer key.

The activities are meant to aid textual comprehension, provide creative opportunities for the reader to make personal connections with the text, and help busy teachers gain quick access to classroom-tested and age-appropriate activities that make the teaching of Shakespeare an easier task.

Each regular activity, as well as each culminating activity, can be modified to be an individual or a group task, and the reviews and test can be used as quick comprehension checks or formally scored assessments. The guides may be used in conjunction with the Barron's *Shakespeare Made Easy* texts or alone. Ultimately, the *Shakespeare Made Easy* Activity Guides are intended to assist teachers and students in gaining an increased understanding of and appreciation for the reading of Shakespeare.



Introduction to the Play

A Midsummer Night's Dream Background

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* was unusual for Shakespeare in that he did not base his story on one major source. Instead, this play is a delightful comedy that weaves together many sources and influences. By looking a bit more in depth at the back stories and traditions informing this play, the reader will be able to understand and enjoy the play to a greater degree.

It is first important for the reader to understand that this play is a **comedy.** While the play is very funny in places, humor is not the reason a Shakespeare play is called a comedy. A Shakespearean comedy follows a U-shaped form. It begins with events that descend into potential tragedy, but rise again into a happy ending, usually a marriage. The tragic problems are usually resolved by entrance into a "green world," where a withdrawal from the pressures of civilized society results in the working out of a happy solution.

This play is thought to have been performed for a noble wedding. The entire play is centered around the idea of marriage, and, in fact, it ends with a triple marriage. The style is that of a **masque,** a show that used humor, magic, and spectacle. In a marriage masque, there would be music and dancing, which is also a part of A *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

It's helpful for the reader to understand the relationship and role of Theseus and Hippolyta. Their story is told by Plutarch, the famous historian who wrote *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans.* Theseus was considered the founder of Athens. His life's path was foretold by the oracle of Apollo, consulted by his father, Aegeus. The oracle told Aegeus to abstain from all women until he returned to his home city. Otherwise, he would not be able to father any other children, and the son fathered in this untimely way would be his destruction. However, Aegeus was tricked into sleeping with a woman named Aethra, who hid the resulting child from Aegeus. This child, Theseus, was finally reunited with Aegeus when he was a young man.

To prove his loyalty and value to Athens, Theseus traveled to Crete to free the children of Athens who were to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. The Minotaur was half bull and half man. As a mark of mourning, the ship carrying the Athenian sacrifice to Crete always flew black flags. If Theseus was successful, he was to fly white flags from the ship so that his father would know everyone was safe. Theseus successfully killed the Minotaur and rescued the children. On the voyage back to Greece, Theseus and his soldiers were celebrating so much that they forgot to fly the white flags. When Aegeus saw the black flags on the ship, he assumed that his son was vanquished. In despair, Aegeus jumped off a high cliff into the ocean and drowned. Theseus was very upset at his father's unnecessary death, but was soon crowned king of Athens. As king, Theseus

began to unify the people of Athens and to set up a rule by the people.

A few years later, to show his leadership and prowess, he journeyed with his cousin Hercules to the land of the Amazons. The Amazons were a tribe of strong woman warriors, led by their queen, Hippolyta. According to some legends, the Amazons would nurture their female children, but they returned their male children to the fathers—men whom the Amazons visited for one month each year. The Amazons were fierce and smart. When Hercules and Theseus arrived at the Amazon settlement, they invited the queen of the Amazons on board their ship. She went aboard the ship, bearing gifts of peace. Theseus tricked Hippolyta, and set sail for Athens before she could get off the ship. Hippolyta became attracted to Theseus and agreed to marry him. Their story is also presented in Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale." The opening scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* begins with the preparations in Athens for their wedding.

This play is set during the **Midsummer Night's celebrations.** These festivals were marked with merriment and flirtations. A Maypole was decorated, and Morris dances were performed around the pole. A Morris dancer would wear a bright, ribboned costume that was covered with bells. These bells would make a lovely noise during the dances. Young men and women would spend the night in the woods and return in the morning with tree branches to decorate the town. These celebrations were also called "the fetching home of May" or "the rites of May." In this play, Hermia, Helena, Lysander, and Demetrius go into the woods—the green world—and there all their love problems are solved. When they are found in the morning, Theseus declares that they, "rose up early to observe/The rite of May . . ." (Act four, Scene 1).

The fairy world also plays an important role in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Oberon and Titania, the King and Queen of the Faeries, were part of the common folklore of Shakespeare. Their home is the forest outside of Athens, and their quarrels are blamed for miserable weather and poor crops. Their support of the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyta as well as that of the young Athenians is expected to bring the humans good fortune.

Oberon is aided in his rule by Puck, also known as Robin Goodfellow. Puck is based on the elf or goblin known as Puck who was said to play tricks on humans, especially at night. This characteristic fits well with Puck's eagerness to put love juice in the eyes of the young lovers. Puck also has magical powers: He can create a fog, travel very quickly, and cause Bottom to become transformed. The transformation of Bottom's head into an ass's head was probably suggested to Shakespeare by the book from the second century C.E. called *The Golden Ass,* by Apuleius. In the story by Apuleius, the narrator turns into an ass and finds himself pursued by a beautiful woman who is superior to him in society. The book had been translated into English in 1566 and was widely read in Shakespeare's day.

A play within a play is a common occurrence in Shakespearean drama. In this case, it is a play put on by characters called "rude

mechanicals"—"rude" because these characters are unsophisticated and "mechanicals" because these men earn a living doing work with their hands. The play about Pyramus and Thisbe is based on the story by the Roman writer Ovid, who lived from 43 B.C.E. to C.E. 17. Pyramus loved Thisbe, who lived next door to him in Babylon. Their parents did not approve of their relationship, so they were forced to talk to each other through a crack in the wall that ran between their property. Tired of the separation, they arranged to meet in a graveyard near their home. Thisbe arrived at the graveyard first but ran away when a lion appeared. The lion had just killed some prey, so its mouth was stained with blood. The lion found a cloak that Thisbe had dropped, and in nosing the cloak, covered it with some of the blood. Pyramus finally arrived and could not find Thisbe. Instead, he saw her blood-stained cloak and decided that she had been murdered. In despair, Pyramus killed himself. Thisbe then returned to the graveyard, where she saw that Pyramus was dead. She, too, took her own life. A legend comes from their death of a black mulberry tree that only bears black fruit as a sign of mourning for young Pyramus and Thisbe.

The final element of this play is the nature of the **dream.** Bottom thinks his experience with Titania was a rare dream. He tries to speak about the wondrous nature of the dream, and his words evoke the biblical verses from I Corinthians 2, which talks about the mysteries of the wisdom of God: "For as it is written, the eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9). Even though Bottom comically reverses the images of this verse, he captures the sense of wonder of his dream. When the four lovers wake up, they feel that they dreamed of their adventures in the woods. And, at the conclusion of the play, Puck addresses the audience to say that if they did not enjoy the play, they should imagine that it was all a dream.

Synopsis of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Act one, Scene 1

Theseus and Hippolyta discuss their upcoming marriage. Interrupting their plans, Egeus asks for a ruling from Theseus regarding his disobedient daughter, Hermia. Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius, but Hermia wishes to marry Lysander. Requesting that Hermia be sentenced to a nunnery or death, Egeus pleads his case before Theseus. Theseus has no option but to follow the law of Athens. Hermia will have until the wedding to make her choice.

In order to discredit Demetrius, Lysander states that Demetrius had courted Helena and caused Helena to fall in love with Demetrius. Therefore, he declares that he is a better suitor for Hermia. Everyone leaves except Lysander and Hermia.

Lysander tells Hermia his plans for them to escape Egeus and the law by fleeing into the woods. In a different town on the other side of the woods lives Lysander's aunt, who will help them get married. Hermia agrees to the plan. Helena arrives, and Lysander and Hermia

tell Helena their plan so she will realize that Demetrius will be free to marry her. After Lysander and Hermia leave, Helena decides to tell Demetrius of the elopement so he will appreciate her and perhaps become attracted to her again.

Act one, Scene 2

The craftsmen from town—Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, Starveling, and Bottom—meet together to plan the play they wish to perform at Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding celebration. The little play, or interlude, that they will perform is the story of Pyramus and Thisbe. Quince acts as the director and manager, and he gives everyone a role. One player, Bottom, is told that he will play Pyramus. However, Bottom really wants to play all the parts, and he gives examples of how he will play each role with amazing skill and excellence. Quince tells him he can only play the part of Pyramus. They plan to go over their parts the next night in the woods so that they can keep their work a secret.

Act two, Scene 1

Puck discusses the fight between Oberon and Titania with another fairy. The King and Queen of the fairies, Oberon and Titania, appear and begin to argue about Titania's keeping of the Indian boy. Oberon schemes to get the boy back by playing a trick on Titania. He tells Puck to get a special flower that causes anyone to fall madly in love with the first being he or she sees upon awakening. Oberon will put the love juice in Titania's eyes, and she will fall in love with the first living being she sees. While she is distracted, Oberon will steal the boy to be his page. Oberon then overhears Helena chasing Demetrius. Oberon decides to put the love juice in Demetrius' eyes so he will love Helena. Puck returns with the flower for Oberon to put into Titania's eyes while she is sleeping. Oberon then instructs Puck to find Demetrius and put the love juice in his eyes so that when he wakes he will be in love with Helena. He tells Puck that he will know who Demetrius is by "the Athenian garments" that he wears.

Act two, Scene 2

Titania is sung to sleep, and then Oberon charms her eyes with the flower love juice. Soon, Hermia and Lysander enter the scene. After discussing where Lysander should rest, they sleep. Puck arrives and assumes that Lysander is the Athenian he is supposed to enchant with the love juice, so he makes the mistake of placing the flower love juice in Lysander's eyes. Helena and Demetrius arrive, and Demetrius continues to reject Helena's love. He leaves without her, and then Helena notices Lysander sleeping on the ground. She wakes up Lysander, and he falls instantly in love with her due to Puck's love juice. She does not believe Lysander's declaration of love, thinking he is mocking her. She leaves, pursued by Lysander. Hermia wakes up alone and in despair.

Act three, Scene 1

The craftsmen begin their rehearsal in the woods. When Puck sees their amateur work, he

decides to play a trick on Bottom and changes his head to the head of an ass. The other men see Bottom and flee in fear and amazement. Bottom begins to sing to show that he is not afraid. Titania wakes to his singing and falls immediately in love with him due to her enchantment. Titania assigns four of her fairies to wait on Bottom.

Act three, Scene 2

Oberon hears that Titania has fallen for an ass, and he is very happy. Hermia and Demetrius arrive, and Hermia accuses Demetrius of killing Lysander because of their rivalry. Demetrius denies any harm to Lysander. Oberon overhears their argument and realizes that Puck has put the love juice in the wrong Athenian's eyes. Oberon causes Demetrius to sleep and he puts love juice in Demetrius' eyes. Lysander and Helena arrive, and Demetrius wakes up with his eyes on Helena. He falls in love with her immediately. Now both Lysander and Deme-trius declare their undying love to Helena, and Lysander rejects Hermia. Helena does not believe any of them, and feels that they are making fun of her. Everyone argues and calls each other names, and the two men agree to fight a duel for Helena's love. While the men are trying to fight, Puck intervenes with a fog and impersonations, so neither man finds the other. When they are both asleep from their fruitless chase, Puck puts an antidote in Lysander's eyes so his love of Hermia will be restored. Helena and Hermia also both fall asleep in the woods.

Act four, Scene 1

Titania fusses over Bottom, and her fairy attendants wait on his every whim. He is especially craving oats and hay. He falls asleep, with Titania at his side. Oberon then tells Puck how he got the little Indian boy away from Titania, since she was so distracted by her love for Bottom. He feels sorry for Titania's infatuation, and he squeezes the love antidote into her eyes before he wakes her up. When she wakes, she no longer loves Bottom, and Puck removes the ass head from Bottom. Oberon and Titania make sure that all the mortals are in a deep sleep. Theseus, Hippolyta, and Egeus enter the woods to hunt with hounds. Theseus orders the huntsmen to wake the four lovers with hunting horns. Even though Egeus is upset that Hermia loves Lysander, Theseus overrules Egeus and declares that there should be a triple wedding: Theseus and Hippolyta, Hermia and Lysander, and Helena and Demetrius. They depart for Athens, leaving Bottom alone. He remembers his dream and is so overwhelmed with its glory that he vows to have a ballad called "Bottom's Dream" written of his dream.

Act four, Scene 2

The craftsmen are worried about the play since Bottom is gone.To their surprise, Bottom arrives, and they prepare to present their play to the wedding party.

Act five, Scene 1

Theseus dismisses the stories of the four young lovers, saying that their love is like the madmen

and the poets, full of air and imagination only. The other brides and grooms enter, and Theseus calls for entertainment to celebrate the marriages. Philostrate brings Theseus a list of options for performance, and Theseus is intrigued by the Pyramus and Thisbe play. The craftsmen perform with great gusto, and everyone enjoys the performance. At the end of the interlude, everyone goes to bed, and the fairies come to bless all the marriages. Puck remains at the very end and addresses the audience, asking for their friendship.

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* Character List

Members of the Court of Athens

Theseus: Duke of Athens

Hippolyta: Queen of the Amazons; engaged to marry Theseus

Philostrate: Master of the Revels. His job is to organize the entertainment for the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta.

Egeus: Father of Hermia

Lords and Attendants for Theseus and Hipployta: Part of the Athenian court

The Four Young Lovers

Hermia: Daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander. She is rather short.

Helena: Friend to Hermia, in love with Demetrius. She is tall and willowy.

Demetrius: In love with Hermia and favored by Egeus. He recently gave his affection to Helena. He looks somewhat like Lysander.

Lysander: In love with Hermia, who returns his love. He is equal in social standing to Demetrius, and he looks somewhat like Demetrius.

The Magical Fairy World

Oberon: The King of the Fairies. He uses magic to ensure that everyone ends up with his or her proper love mate.

Titania: The Queen of the Fairies. She is quarreling with her husband, Oberon, about keeping a young boy in her entourage. After she recovers from being charmed into falling in love with Bottom, she makes peace with Oberon to bless the marriages at the end of the play.

Puck: Also called Robin Goodfellow. A fairy or an elf who is an assistant to Oberon. He enjoys pulling pranks on the humans.

Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth, Mustardseed: Fairy attendants for Titania

Other Fairies: Attendants for Oberon and Titania

The Rude Mechanicals

Peter Quince: A carpenter (a quince is a wooden wedge used by carpenters). He is the director of the group and delivers the **Prologue,** the introductory speech at the beginning of their play.

Frances Flute: A bellows mender. His name relates to his work, as a flute is the nozzle through which the bellows releases the air. Because he is younger, he portrays **Thisbe.**

Nick Bottom: A weaver. His name is related to his work, as "bottom" is the core for a skein of yarn. He plays **Pyramus.**

Tom Snout: A tinker. A tinker often repaired the snout or spout of teapots. Snout plays the **wall** in *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Robin Starveling: A tailor. It was a common stereotype that tailors were very, very thin. He plays **Moonshine** in the play.

Shakespeare and Stage Directions

The plays of Shakespeare are so well written that they seem to leap off the page and come to life. However, the plays themselves have very few stage directions. Perhaps this is because Shakespeare's plays were performed in large amphitheaters that were very simple.

This was a time before electric lights, so the plays needed to take place during the day to utilize the natural light. The average time for a performance was between noon and two in the afternoon. Theater historians report that there were typically no intermissions; plays ran from beginning to end without a break and took about two hours.

The set might have been painted canvas to illustrate whether the play was occurring in a forest or a town, for example. Sometimes the background was accompanied by a sign that indicated the place as well. Props were few and large: a table, a chariot, gallows, a bed, or a throne.

However, the audience attending Shakespeare's plays expected a spectacle for the price of admission. Therefore, there were many devices to produce a gasp from the audience. For example, a device in the loft of the theater could raise and lower actors so that they could play gods, ghosts, or other unusual characters. Additionally, a trapdoor in the stage offered a chance for a quick appearance or disappearance. The actors could suggest a beheading or hanging with various illusions on the stage. Sound effects suggesting thunder, horses, or war were common. Music was important, and drums and horns were often played.

Most important to the sense of spectacle were the costumes worn by the actors. These were elaborate, colorful, and very expensive. Therefore, they often purchased these outfits from servants who had inherited the clothes from their masters or from hangmen, who received the clothes of their victims as payment for their services.

Though Shakespeare's stage directions are sparse, definition of a few key terms will be helpful for the reader. The following is a brief glossary of stage directions commonly found in Shakespeare's plays.

Selected Glossary of Stage Directions in Shakespeare's Plays

Above: an indication that the actor speaking from above is on a higher balcony or other scaffold that is higher than the other actors

Alarum: a stage signal, which calls the soldiers to battle; usually trumpets, drums, and shouts

Aside: words spoken by the actor so the audience overhears but the other actors on

the stage do not. An aside may also be spoken to one other actor so that the others on stage do not overhear.

Calls within: a voice offstage that calls to a character on the stage

Curtains: Curtains were fabrics draped around a bed that could be opened or closed for privacy.

Draw: Actors pull their swords from their sheathes.

Enter: a direction for a character to enter the stage. This can be from the audience's right (stage right) or the audience's left (stage left).

Enter Chorus: a direction for an actor to come to the center of the stage and offer some introductory comments, usually in blank verse or rhyming couplets. In *Romeo and Juliet,* the Chorus delivers a sonnet, a form of poetry associated with love.

Exeunt: All characters leave the stage, or those characters named leave the stage.

Exit: One character leaves the stage.

Flourish: A group of trumpets or other horn instruments play a brief melody.

Have at: Characters begin to fight, usually with swords.

Pageant: a show or spectacle of actors in unusual costumes, usually without words

Prologue: an introduction spoken by the Chorus that gives an overview to the audience and invites them into the play or scene

Recline: to relax on a bed or pillow

Retires: A character slips away.

Sennet: a series of notes sounded on brass instruments to announce the approach or departure of a procession

Singing: a signal for the actor to sing the following lines as a tune

Wanders about: A character may exit and enter the stage, seeming to be in a kind of daze or distraction.

Within: voices or sounds occurring off stage but heard by the audience



Introduction to Shakespeare

A Brief Biography of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born in April 1564 to John and Mary Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. His birthday is celebrated on April 23. This is memorable because April 23 is also the day Shakespeare died in 1616.

Shakespeare was the eldest of nine children in his family, six of whom survived to adulthood.

William Shakespeare's father worked with leather and became a successful merchant early in his career. He held some relatively important government offices. However, when William was in his early teens, his father's financial position began to slide due to growing debt. After many years, John Shakespeare's fortunes and respect were restored, but records indicate that the years of debt and lawsuits were very stressful.

Historians assume that young Will went to school and took a rigorous course of study including Latin, history, and biblical study. In 1582, at the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, who was three months pregnant. Studies of Elizabethan family life indicate that Anne's situation was not unusual since it was accepted that the engagement period was as legally binding as the marriage. The couple had a daughter, Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Not much is known about Shakespeare during the next seven years, but his name is listed as an actor in London by 1592. This was a difficult time for the theater because measures to prevent the spread of the plague regularly closed the theaters.

Between 1594 and 1595, Shakespeare joined the Chamberlain's Men as a playwright and actor. The acting company featured actor Richard Burbage, and they were a favorite of Queen Elizabeth I. During this time, Shakespeare was writing such plays as *Romeo and Juliet* and A *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Even though Shakespeare was enjoying great success by the time he was 32, it was dampened by the death of his son, Hamnet, in 1596. Soon after, Shakespeare refocused on his home in Stratford where he bought an estate called New Place, with gardens, orchards, and barns in addition to the main home. He still maintained a home in London near the theater.

In 1599, Shakespeare wrote *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, and *As You Like It*. The Globe Playhouse was up and running, with Shakespeare a 10 percent owner. This means that he was able to earn 10 percent of any show's profits. This business position helped him solidify his wealth.

In 1603, Shakespeare's reputation earned his acting troop the sponsorship of James I, who requested one play performance per month. Their name changed to the King's Men. By this time, Shakespeare had written and performed in almost all of his comedies and histories. He was proclaimed the finest playwright in London.

But Shakespeare still had what is considered his finest writing to do. He began his writing of tragedies beginning with *Hamlet* in 1600. In the following five years, Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*. Why Shakespeare turned to these darker, more serious themes is widely debated by scholars. But all agree that these plays established Shakespeare's premier place in English literature.

Toward the end of 1609 through 1610, Shakespeare began to write his problem romances. These works, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*, are rich with mature themes of forgiveness, grace, and redemption.

After 1611, at the age of 47, Shakespeare moved back to Stratford exclusively, settling into life at New Place and enjoying a renewed relationship with his daughters, especially Susanna. He prepared a will, which has become famous for the request to leave his wife their "second best bed." Many have debated whether this is a sentimental or cynical bequest. In the same year that his daughter Judith married, 1616, Shakespeare died at the age of 52. However, it was not until 1623 that all his plays were collected into one manuscript, now referred to as the *First Folio*. The fellow King's Men players who compiled the manuscript, Heming and Condell, entitled it *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*.

Shakespeare's England

The age of Shakespeare was a glorious time for England. William Shakespeare's life in England was defined by the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). During her leadership, England became an important naval and economic force in Europe and beyond.

England's rise to power came when its navy defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588, when Shakespeare was about 24 years old. Queen Elizabeth was skillful in navigating through the conflicts of religion. She maintained religious independence from Rome as the Church of England became firmly rooted during her reign. Additionally, she financed the establishment of colonies in America to grow the British Empire and expand its economic opportunities. At the end of her reign, England was the leader in trade, naval power, and culture.

Because of its role as the main economic, political, and cultural center of England, London became the hub of England's prosperity and fame. If anyone wanted to become famous as a poet or dramatic writer during Shakespeare's time, he would need to be in London. In fact, London was full of great writers besides Shakespeare, such as Marlowe, Sidney, and Jonson. Yet, even as London was full of parties, trade, and amusement, it was also full of poverty, crime, and disease. Crime was a large problem, and the main jail in London was called the Clink. Disease and poor sanitation were common. In fact, twice in Shakespeare's lifetime, London endured an outbreak of the

plague, which killed thousands upon thousands of people.

Before Queen Elizabeth took the throne, London was a modestly sized city of about 60,000 people. By the time James I took the throne at her death, more than 200,000 people lived in London and its suburbs. People were attracted to London because it gave many opportunities for work and financial improvement. It was also a vibrant social scene for the upper class. In fact, one honor of being a noble was the opportunity to house Queen Elizabeth and her entire party if she was in your neighborhood. If she was a guest, it was expected that her noble hosts would cover all the expenses of housing her group. She made many "progresses" through England and London, establishing her relationships with the nobility. However, several nobles asked to be released from this honor because the expense of supporting her visit had often caused them bankruptcy.

Perhaps it was better to be a flourishing member of the English merchant middle class. Their numbers and influence were rising in England at the time of Shakespeare. This was a new and an exciting development in Western European history. One major factor in the rise of the middle class was the need for wool for clothing. The expansion of the wool trade led to the formation of entire cities throughout England, and sparked progress in many other areas of commerce and trade.

With the rise of the middle class came a concern for more comfortable housing. Rather than serving simply as shelter or defense against attack, housing developed architecturally and functionally. One major improvement was the use of windows to let in light. Also, houses were built with lofts and special places for eating and sleeping, rather than having one multifunctional room. However, doors between rooms were still very rare, so that privacy in Shakespeare's time did not really exist.

Meals in Shakespeare's England were an important part of the day. Breakfast was served before dawn and was usually bread and a beverage. Therefore, everyone was really hungry for the midday meal, which could last for up to three hours. If meat was available in the home, it was usually served at this time. A smaller supper was eaten at 6:00 or 7:00 P.M., with the more wealthy people able to eat earlier and the working class eating later. Cooking was dangerous and difficult since all meals were cooked over an open fire. Even bread was not baked in an oven but was cooked in special pans placed over the fire. A pot was almost always cooking on the fire, and the cook would put in whatever was available for supper. This is most likely where the term of "potluck" came from.

Furniture was usually made of carved wood, as woodcarving was a developing craft in Shakespeare's day. One important part of an Elizabethan home was the table, or "board." One side was finished to a nice sheen, while the other side was rough. Meals were served on the rough side of the board, and then it was flipped for a more elegant look in the room. The table is where we get the terms "room and board" and having "the tables turned." Another important part of a middle- or an upper-class

home was the bed. Rather than being made of prickly straw, mattresses were now stuffed with softer feathers. Surrounded by artistically carved four posts, these beds were considered s valuable that they were often a specifically named item in a will.

Clothing in Shakespeare's time was very expensive. Of course, servants and other lower-class people wore simple garb, often a basic blue. But if a person wanted to display his wealth, his clothing was elaborate and colorful, sewn with rich velvet, lace, and gold braid. An average worker might earn seven or eight English pounds in a year, and a very nice outfit for a nobleman might cost as much as 50 or 60 pounds. In other words, if seven or eight healthy workers pooled their money for the entire year, spending nothing else, they could buy only one respectable nobleman's outfit.

Entertainment was an important part of life in Shakespeare's England. Popular sports were bear-baiting, cockfighting, and an early form of bowling. Bear-baiting, in which a dog was set loose to fight with up to three chained bears in the center of an amphitheater, and cockfighting, where roosters pecked each other to death, were popular then, but would be absolutely unacceptable entertainment today. Bowling, however, has maintained its popularity in our current culture.

In London, a main source of entertainment was the theater. Some theaters were very large and could hold more than two thousand people. Even poor people could attend the theater since entrance cost only one penny (equivalent to 60 cents today), and they could stand around the stage. For a bit more money, a person could sit in an actual seat during the performance. However, some thought that going to the theater could be dangerous to your body or your soul. The theaters were closed twice during the plagues to reduce the spread of the disease. The Puritans disapproved of the theater as an unwholesome leisure-time activity. And the Puritans also disliked the theater because the theaters were located in an area of London surrounded by brothels and bars. Nevertheless, the theater became respectable enough by 1603 to be supported by James I—and he was the monarch who directed the King James Version of the Bible to be translated.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 1

Creating a Character Guide

Background Shakespearean romantic comedies often abound with mistaken identities and love gone awry. A *Midsummer Night's Dream* is no exception, and it may become difficult to remember who loves whom without a helpful guide.

Directions As you read the play, fill in the following character guide with (1) a description of the character based on your reading and put into your own words and (2) a quotation by the character that reveals who or what is important to that character and your explanation of the quotation. Feel free to revise what you have written as your understanding of the character grows through reading the play. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary. See the example below for guidance.

Hermia

Description: Loves Lysander, though her father wants her to marry Demetrius.

Quotation and explanation: "But I beseech your Grace, that I may know the worst that may befall me in this case, if I refuse to wed Demetrius." Hermia is asking Theseus what will happen to her if she disobeys her father and refuses to marry Demetrius.

Helena

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Demetrius

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

(continued)



ACTIVITY 1

Creating a Character Guide (continued)

Lysander

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Theseus

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Hippolyta

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Oberon

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Titania

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

(continued)

Student Name ______________________ Date __________



ACTIVITY 1

Creating a Character Guide (continued)

Puck

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Nick Bottom

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Egeus

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Peter Quince

Description:

Quotation and explanation:

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 2

Hermia Speaks from the Heart

Act one, Scene 1

Background In this scene, Egeus pleads his case with Theseus, the Duke of Athens. He claims that his daughter, Hermia, is going against his wishes for her marriage by desiring to marry Lysander; he wants her to marry Demetrius. He pleads for the Duke to allow him to enforce his parental right: If Hermia will not marry Demetrius, then she should die. The Duke later softens the punishment by saying if she does not marry Demetrius, she will have to become a nun. As a result, Hermia and Lysander decide to run away.

Directions Reread lines 81–84 and Hermia and Lysander's exchange in lines 130–180 to better understand how Hermia feels about being forced to marry someone whom she does not love. Then, compose a letter from Hermia to her father, Egeus, expressing why she cannot marry Demetrius. Egeus sees her refusal to marry Demetrius as willful disobedience; as Hermia, try to convince him that it really is true love. Also include the young lovers' plan to run away and explain why that is necessary. If you wish, include your feelings about the consequences of Hermia's choice to disobey her father. Suggested length: ¾ of a page–1½ pages. You will need to use another sheet of paper.

Student Name ____________________ Date __________

ACTIVITY 3

Views of Love

Act one, Scene 1

Background Shakespeare has many characters talking about love in this scene, and they have very different views of it.

Directions After rereading the following lines that each of the characters speak, provide a few sentences detailing what these lines show us about how the character regards love.

Theseus (lines 18–21):

Egeus (lines 97–100):

Lysander (lines 134–137):

Helena (lines 229–254):

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 4

It Could Happen Today

Act one, Scene 1

Background In lines 229 to 254, Helena is lamenting the fact that Demetrius loves Hermia and not her, despite the fact that she is as beautiful as Hermia. This is all the more painful for Helena because Demetrius did love her at one time. This situation (loving someone who doesn't love you back) rings as true today as it did then.

Directions Invent a modern-day context for Helena's speech and then rewrite the speech for that context.

> Context example: Helen (Helena) is a junior in high school and wants to go to the prom with a guy named Damon (Demetrius). They dated all of last year, but then over the summer, Damon broke up with Helen to date Mia (Hermia), a sophomore, whom he is planning on taking to the prom. Helen is upset and trying to figure out a way to get Damon interested in her again.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 5

Review

Directions Answer the following. Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided. For 7 and 10, write true (T) or false (F) in the space provided.

___ 1. As the play opens, whom is Theseus about to marry?

a. Hermia
b. Titania
c. Hippolyta
d. Helena

___ 2. What complaint does Egeus bring to Theseus?

a. He loves a woman who doesn't love him.
b. His daughter, Hermia, wants to marry one suitor, but Egeus wants her to marry another.
c. He is angered that the fairies have interfered in his life, and he wants revenge.
d. none of the above

___ 3. What is NOT one of the possible punishments for a young woman who doesn't agree to the traditional arranged marriage?

a. death
b. She must become a nun.
c. She must join a harem.
d. none of the above

___ 4. Theseus is duke of what city?

a. Rome
b. Athens
c. Paris
d. Florence

___ 5. What is Hermia and Lysander's plan?

a. They agree to forget about each other so Hermia doesn't face her father's wrath.
b. They will meet in the woods, and then they will go to his aunt's house and get married.
c. They will ask Helena to help Demetrius forget Hermia, which will make him leave them alone.
d. They will secretly appeal to Theseus to overrule Hermia's father.

___ 6. What is Helena's rationale for telling Demetrius of Hermia and Lysander's plan?

a. Demetrius might thank her, and she will have a reason to see him.
b. She hopes that Demetrius will give up loving Hermia once he hears about it.
c. She wants to get Hermia in trouble with Theseus.
d. She just likes to gossip.

(continued)

Student Name ______________________________ Date __________



ACTIVITY 5

Review (*continued*)

___ 7. True or false: Hermia and Helena have been friends since childhood.

___ 8. Lysander says, "The course of true love never did run smooth." What does this mean?

a. True love always has its difficulties.
b. Lovers who want to stay fit need to exercise more.
c. Young people's schooling back then focused on love and how to properly love another.
d. none of the above

___ 9. Theseus' marriage is how many days away?

a. 1
b. 2
c. 3
d. 4

___ 10. True or false: Demetrius did, at one time, profess to love Helena.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________

ACTIVITY 6

Comic Relief

Act one, Scene 2

Background Shakespeare often included a comic foil to the main drama occurring in his plays. In Act one, Scene 1, four members of Athenian aristocracy face serious trouble in their love lives. Hermia and Lysander run off to get married, Helena laments that Demetrius no longer loves her, and Demetrius angrily goes to find Hermia. In Scene 2, the rude mechanicals, a comical group of everyday citizens, begins to work on a play. They aren't a very intelligent group, and they keep saying funny things without realizing it. Nick Bottom is the highlight of all of this comedy, since he considers himself a first-rate actor.

Directions Choose four comical lines or exchanges in this scene and explain why they are funny. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

1. Line(s) and character speaking it/them:

   Explanation:

2. Line(s) and character speaking it/them:

   Explanation:

3. Line(s) and character speaking it/them:

   Explanation:

4. Line(s) and character speaking it/them:

   Explanation:

Student Name ______________________________ Date __________

ACTIVITY 7

The Mischievous Puck

Act two, Scene 1

Background This scene is our first introduction to the fairy world, a magical world where supernatural beings interfere with the daily lives of humans. The most famous of fairies is Puck, a mischievous fairy who runs errands for Oberon, the King of the Fairies.

Directions

1. Reread lines 32 to 57, in which another fairy and Puck himself describe what he is like.
2. Condense these lines into a paragraph or two describing Puck in your own words (based on what you have read). You may even choose to write a "Puck Poem." Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.
3. Finally, in the box below draw a picture of Puck as you imagine him to look, including some of the identifying characteristics from your paragraphs/poem.

Description/Poem:

Picture of Puck (drawn in box below):

Student Name ______________________ Date ________

ACTIVITY 8

The Lyrical Fairy World

Act two, Scene 1

Background Shakespeare gives the most lyrical and beautiful lines to the fairies. Titania's long and poetic speech from lines 81 to 117 is a perfect example.

Directions Look for the literary devices in Titania's speech listed below, and provide at least one example of each below. Write the line numbers for the example, the example itself, and then briefly explain what it means.

Imagery: anything appealing to the senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell)

Example: The leaves rustled and crackled in the waning moonlight.

Alliteration: repeated initial consonant sounds

Example: Shelia sold seashells by the seashore.

Assonance: repeated vowel sounds

Example: Br**ea**the and sn**ee**ze and wh**ee**ze pl**ea**se.

Personification: giving human characteristics to something that is not human

Example: The tree wept over losing his leaves.

Imagery

1. Lines with explanation:

2. Lines with explanation:

(continued)

Student Name ____________________ Date __________

ACTIVITY 8

The Lyrical Fairy World (continued)

Alliteration

1. Lines with explanation:

2. Lines with explanation:

Assonance

1. Lines with explanation:

2. Lines with explanation:

Personification

1. Lines with explanation:

2. Lines with explanation:

Student Name ______________________________ Date ______________



ACTIVITY 9

A Fairy Fight

Act two, Scene 1

Background Titania describes the impact her ongoing battle with Oberon has on the mortal world in her speech in lines 81–117.

Directions First, in your own words, explain what Oberon and Titania are fighting about. Next, reread Titania's speech and paraphrase the four major negative effects that their battle is having on the humans and their world.

1. What are Titania and Oberon fighting about (lines 118–120)? Why is Titania refusing to compromise on this issue (lines 121–137)?

2. What are the negative effects of Oberon and Titania's fight?

   a. Effect 1 (lines 88–100):

   b. Effect 2 (lines 101 and 102):

   c. Effect 3 (lines 103–105):

   d. Effect 4 (lines 106–114):

Student Name ______________________________ Date __________



ACTIVITY 10
Review

Directions Test your understanding of the characters thus far by matching each character with the correct description of him or her. All letters will be used at least once, and some letters will be used more than once. Write the letter of the correct answer in the space provided.

a. Egeus
b. Theseus
c. Oberon
d. Helena
e. Lysander
f. Demetrius
g. Hermia
h. Hippolyta
i. Titania
j. Puck
k. Nick Bottom

____ 1. Amazon Queen

____ 2. mischievous spirit who works for the King of the Fairies

____ 3. King of the Fairies

____ 4. wants to marry someone her father doesn't approve of

____ 5. raising a child whose mother died in childbirth

____ 6. young man whom Egeus wants to marry his daughter

____ 7. Queen of the Fairies

____ 8. is scorned by the man she loves

____ 9. has an aunt who lives outside of Athens

____ 10. begs for his right as a father to decide his daughter's fate, should she disobey him

____ 11. Duke of Athens

____ 12. will play Pyramus in a play, but wants to play the lion as well

____ 13. plans to tell Demetrius of Lysander and Hermia's plan to run away

____ 14. wooed and won his wife-to-be by conquering her

____ 15. flies off to find an enchanted herb

Student Name ____________________ Date ________

ACTIVITY 11

The Lives of Fairies

Act two, Scene 1

Background Shakespeare tells us much during the course of this play about the world of fairies and what they are like.

Directions Reread the following lines from Act two, Scene 1, and come to your own conclusions about what fairies are like and what they do. Write your answers under the Your Response column.

Line(s)	Your Response
1. (Fairy to Puck, lines 2–7) "Over hill over dale, thorough bush, thorough briar, over park over pale, thorough flood, thorough fire, I do wander every where, swifter than the moon's sphere."	
2. (Puck to Fairy, lines 24–26) "And jealous Oberon would have the child knight of his train, to trace the forests wild."	
3. (Puck to Fairy, lines 30–31) "But they do square, that all their elves for fear creep into acorn cups and hide them there."	
4. (Puck to Fairy, lines 43–44) "I am that merry wanderer of the night. I jest to Oberon, and make him smile."	
5. (Oberon to Titania, lines 74–76) "How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania, glance at my credit with Hippolyta, knowing I know thy love to Theseus?"	

(continued)

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 11

The Lives of Fairies (continued)

Line	Your Response
6. (Titania to Oberon, line 81) "These are the forgeries of jealousy."	
7. (Titania to Oberon, lines 124–125, 135–137) "And in the spiced Indian air, by night, full often hath she gossiped by my side. . . . But she, being mortal, of that boy did die; and for her sake do I rear up her boy, and for her sake I will not part with him."	
8. (Oberon to Puck, lines 146–147) "Well, go thy way; thou shalt not from this grove till I torment thee for this injury."	
9. (Puck to Oberon, lines 175–176) "I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes."	
10. (Oberon to Puck, lines 253–256) "There sleeps Titania sometime of the night, lulled in those flowers with dances and delight; and there the snake throws her enamelled skin, weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in. . . ."	

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 12

The Big Mix-up

Act two, Scene 2

Background This is a pivotal scene in the play. Oberon instructs Puck to put love juice on Demetrius' eyes, so that when he wakes, he will love the spurned Helena. Puck mistakenly puts the juice on Lysander's eyes, and he awakes to the sight of Helena, with whom he falls instantly in love. And so the madness begins. . . .

Directions Incorporate the following information from this scene into a rap, news story, or poem. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

- Hermia loves Lysander.
- Lysander loves Helena.
- Helena loves Demetrius.
- Demetrius loves Hermia.
- Helena believes that Lysander is mocking her just to hurt her.
- Oberon is going to steal the boy from Titania.
- Titania is going to fall in love with the next person or creature she sees.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 13

Your Thoughts on Love

Background In this play, all it takes for true love to bloom is an application of juice from an enchanted flower. Many views of love are expressed in this play.

Directions Now it is time to consider some of your own thoughts on this universal theme. Answer the following questions thoughtfully, using complete sentences. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary. Be prepared for a possible class discussion on some of the answers.

1. If a love potion really existed, would you use it on someone? Why or why not?

2. In Act two, Scene 1, Helena is chasing after Demetrius and makes the statement that "We [women] should be wooed, and were not made to woo." Do you believe that this traditional approach to dating—that men should be the pursuers, and not the other way around—is still true for today? Why or why not?

3. What is your definition of true love? Do you think it's possible for everyone to find true love?

4. As some of the biggest consumers of media/advertising, teenagers are constantly being bombarded with messages about love, romance, sex, and so forth. Which messages from television shows, movies, teen magazines, or other media do you think are good and why? Which are bad?

5. In the play thus far, what do you think is the central message about love that Shakespeare is trying to get across? Support your answer with lines or scenes from the play.

Student Name ____________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 14

Poor Helena

Act two, Scenes 1 and 2

Background First Helena is utterly spurned by Demetrius; then she believes that she's being made fun of by Lysander when he declares his undying love for her.

Directions Reread the first exchange between Demetrius and Helena (Scene 1, lines 188–244), the ending of Scene 2 when Helena believes Lysander to be pretending to be in love with her just to hurt her, and lines 91–105 and 127–138, when Helena laments her fate and her looks. Imagine that Helena, exhausted and despairing, pours out all of her insecurities, sadness, and sense of injustice in a letter to her mother or her closest friend. Write the letter from Helena's point of view. Suggested length: $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page–1 page. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 15

Review

Directions Read each statement and decide if it is true or false. Then write true (T) or false (F) in the space provided.

____ 1. Puck purposely and mischievously misapplies the potion to Lysander's eyes.

____ 2. Oberon wants Puck to apply the potion to Titania's eyes so that Oberon can take her boy.

____ 3. The fairies in this story have nothing to do with the mortals they observe.

____ 4. Hermia dreams that a snake is eating her heart.

____ 5. Helena falls in love with Lysander in this act.

____ 6. The flower that the love potion comes from was enchanted by a bow from Cupid's arrow.

____ 7. Egeus, Hermia's father, thinks that she is dead.

____ 8. The play within a play is entitled *Pyramus and Thisbe*.

____ 9. Oberon is the Duke of Athens.

____ 10. The fairies sing Titania to sleep.

____ 11. This play takes place during the winter.

____ 12. Demetrius threatens to hurt Helena if she continues to follow him.

____ 13. This play is a comedy.

____ 14. Titania won't give up her boy because the boy's mother was a dear friend.

____ 15. Hermia and Lysander are married by Act two, Scene 2.

Student Name ____________________ Date __________



ACTIVITY 16

Bottom the Ass

Act three, Scene 1

Background Nick Bottom seems to be Shakespeare's favorite comic foil, as it is Bottom who receives the funniest lines, continually misspeaking without realizing it.

Directions In Part A, read the following lines of Bottom from the beginning of this act and explain his mistake. Next, if it is appropriate to the line, comment on what he may be *trying* to say. In Part B, make up two more lines directed either to his fellow actors, Titania, or her fairies in which Bottom misspeaks and it is comical.

Part A

Bottom's Lines	Mistake and Intended Meaning
1. "God shield us, a lion among ladies is a most dreadful thing: for there is not a more fearful wild fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to't." (lines 28–30)	
2. "A calendar, a calendar; look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine." (lines 46–47)	
3. "Thisbe, the flowers of odious savours sweet." (line 73)	
4. "I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father." (lines 171–172)	

Part B

Student Name ______________________ Date __________

ACTIVITY 17

Create a Fairy

Act three, Scene 1

Background Shakespeare created fairies named Peaseblossom, Mustardseed, Cobweb, and Moth who serve Titania and treat their donkey-headed guest Bottom with kindness.

Directions Create a fairy of your own who could serve Titania using the following guidelines.

- Name your fairy with a name reflecting nature (like the fairies mentioned above).
- Describe your fairy's appearance in detail.
- Describe your fairy's powers.
- Describe your fairy's habitat (where this fairy sleeps, lives, plays).
- Show some of your description as you create a brief scene with another fairy (Titania, Oberon, Puck, or any of the fairies who serve Titania) that reflects some of what you have described earlier. This should be in play format. Suggested length: 12–20 lines. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

Student Name ____________________ Date __________



ACTIVITY 18

Insults and Praise the Shakespearean Way

Background Throughout the play, there is much praising and insulting going on, particularly among the lovers.

Directions Construct a brief scene during which praising and/or name-calling occurs; you must use Shakespearean language. Some praises and insults have been provided, but you may find even more within the play or from other Shakespearean plays. Explain the situation and what occurs within it in modern-day language after writing it. Have fun with it; strive to sound like the play you are reading, but don't worry if some words aren't *really* Shakespearean. Your teacher may want you to act out these scenes, and have the class guess what your scene is about. You will need to use another sheet of paper.

Example:
Angry Woman to Man: Thou canker-blossom! Thou didst promise thine son would'st rake my yard, and he hath not yet done it!

Man to Woman: Calm thyself, celestial goddess; I promised forth my son's service, and he shall not disappoint someone with a divine beauty like thou hath.

Woman to Man: Thou hath rightly apologized, and I shall hence forgive this offence.

Explanation: A woman is angry that this man's son promised to rake her yard, and he hasn't completed the task yet. The man promises that his son will complete the task, and he showers her with compliments while apologizing; his flattery works, and she forgives them.

Insults		Praise	
hard-hearted adamant	canker-blossom	celestial goddess	dear saint
dog	puppet	sweet nymph	fair maid
cur	shrew	divine love	my sweet
burr	hindering knot-grass	precious	true love
vile thing	villain	bright angel	knight
hated potion	green-sickness carrion		
tawny Tartar	baggage		
juggler	carbuncle		

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________

ACTIVITY 19

Oberon's Plan

Act three, Scene 2

Background At the hands of Puck and the love juice, the four young lovers are in a complete mess, with Lysander and Demetrius professing love for Helena and hatred for Hermia. Oberon sees the predicament the lovers are in and has a plan for fixing it; he also plans to resolve the situation with Titania and her boy.

Directions Paraphrase the steps of Oberon's plan, using the following numbers and lines. Write your answers below.

Step 1 (lines 360–363):

Step 2 (lines 364–365):

Step 3 (lines 366–371):

Step 4 (lines 372–377):

Step 5 (lines 378–379):

Step 6 (lines 380–384):

Student Name ______________________ Date __________



ACTIVITY 20

Review

Directions Read each question. Then circle the letter of the correct answer.

Multiple Choice

1. Which character is Nick Bottom playing?
   a. Pyramus
   b. Thisbe
2. Does Bottom realize he has a donkey's head?
   a. yes
   b. no
3. In this act, whom does Lysander love?
   a. Hermia
   b. Helena
4. Which woman is short and made fun of for it?
   a. Hermia
   b. Helena
5. Does Oberon plan to release Titania from her love of Bottom?
   a. yes
   b. no
6. What is NOT a name of one of Titania's fairies?
   a. Cobweb
   b. Rainbow
   c. Mustardseed
   d. Moth
7. Why can't Lysander and Demetrius find each other to fight?
   a. Puck has made the night cloudy and even darker.
   b. Puck has put them each into an instantaneous deep sleep.
   c. They don't really want to find each other to fight, so they only half-heartedly look.
   d. Oberon temporarily blinds them.

(continued)



ACTIVITY 20

Review (*continued*)

Directions Match the character with his/her actions thus far. Write the letter of the correct action in the space provided.

Character Matching

	Character	Action
____	8. Peter Quince	a. falls in love with an ass
____	9. Titania	b. flies around applying love juice to people's eyes
____	10. Demetrius	c. makes her love lie farther off for virtue's sake
____	11. Puck	d. sneaks off to his aunt's house to get secretly married
____	12. Lysander	e. makes friends with a group of fairies
____	13. Hermia	f. spurns and threatens Helena, then loves her
____	14. Helena	g. directs the play within a play, *Pyramus and Thisbe*
____	15. Nick Bottom	h. uses her long legs to run away from a fight

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 21

Oberon's Explanation and Titania's Reaction

Background After Oberon removes the spell from Titania and she realizes that she had been in love with a mortal who had a donkey's head, she asks Oberon to explain it all. At this point, she has already given Oberon the boy who started the fight in the first place. Shakespeare never shows us the scene in which Oberon explains all of this to Titania, the Queen of the Fairies. Normally, readers wonder if Titania would be angry and unforgiving about Oberon's cruel enchantment. However, at the end of the play, Titania and Oberon are together and their differences are resolved.

Directions Compose the speech in which Oberon tells Titania what happened and why she loved a mortal with a donkey's head. Include her reaction, but in the end, they must reconcile. Write the speech below. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

Student Name ______________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 22

Symbolism Abounds

Background As in most classical literature, symbolism is plentiful in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare used symbolism for images, places, and characters.

Directions Consider the following elements from the play and attempt to figure out what each may symbolize. Write your answers in the column on the right.

Element	What It May Symbolize
Example: summertime	love, youth, recklessness
1. donkey (Nick Bottom)	
2. the forest	
3. Athens	
4. the play *Pyramus and Thisbe*	
5. night	
6. the hunt (Act five, Scene 1)	
7. Puck	
8. the fairies	
9. marriage	
10. sleep and dreams	

Student Name ______________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 23

’Tis but a Dream

Background Many of the characters in this play awaken from what they think have been strange dreams. The dreams have actually been an enchanted reality brought about by Puck and Oberon.

Directions From each of the following character’s perspective, recount the “dream”; then comment on the reality he or she has awakened to. For example, Bottom’s account of his time with Titania will be vastly different from hers; he, being a mere mortal, probably very much enjoyed being waited on by fairies. Titania, on the other hand, is Queen of the Fairies, and she is probably embarrassed that she loved this man who looked like a donkey.

Character	Description of “Dream”	Character’s Comment/ Assessment
Helena		
Hermia		
Lysander		
Demetrius		
Titania		
Bottom		

Student Name ______________________ Date __________



ACTIVITY 24

Mysterious Hippolyta

Background Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, potentially the most powerful woman in this play, barely utters a word. She is twice interrupted from speaking to Theseus by the young lovers' problems and by Egeus. The first interruption comes in the beginning of the play; the second occurs when the lovers awake and Theseus decrees that the two couples will be married in the temple when he and Hippolyta wed.

Directions Create your scene of at least 20 lines between Theseus and Hippolyta. You may choose the topic of conversation, but you may want to discuss why, in line 124 of Act one, Scene 1, Theseus asks her what is wrong. Is it because she disagrees with Athenian law that a woman must marry whom her father has chosen or face a serious consequence? Or, is it simply because she is irritated that her fiancé is distracted? Or, perhaps you can address Theseus' deciding that all the couples will be married together without first discussing it with Hippolyta. You may use modern-day language or Shakespearean language. Write your scene below. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 25
Review

Directions Number the following events from the first four acts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the order in which they occurred, 1 being first and 10 being last. Write your numbers on the lines provided.

1. _____ Bottom returns from the wood to find his fellow actors.
2. _____ Oberon squeezes the love juice on Titania's eyes.
3. _____ Oberon tells Puck where to find Cupid's love juice.
4. _____ Hermia and Lysander run off to the woods to get married in secret.
5. _____ Demetrius and Lysander try to find one another to fight, but end up falling asleep.
6. _____ Titania and Oberon fight, and she refuses to give him her boy.
7. _____ The lovers awaken to discover that all is well: they each love the proper person.
8. _____ Puck meets a fairy who has heard of him, and he discusses his love of the mischievous.
9. _____ Bottom gets a donkey's head.
10. _____ Egeus comes to Theseus with a complaint about his daughter.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ______________



ACTIVITY 26

How Do I Love Thee?

Act five

Background There is much activity throughout this play centering on characters who love each other. In Act five of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* three couples are married in a triple wedding.

Directions Working with a partner, choose two characters from the play who love each other (Theseus and Hippolyta, Oberon and Titania, Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius). Each of you will write from the perspective of one of the lovers and write a love letter to the other character using as much Shakespearean language as possible. Try to demonstrate the personalities of the characters as you have known them during the course of this play. Feel free to refer to events of the play, and utilize the play for help with language and character voice. For example, Theseus, having wooed Hippolyta by conquering her, will probably write a very different letter than young Lysander. Tip: For more hints on how to write a Shakespearean love letter, read some of Shakespeare's sonnets; he is a master at writing love letters! Suggested length: ¾ page for each love letter. Write your letter below. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

Student Name ______________________________ Date __________

ACTIVITY 27

The Lunatic, the Lover, and the Poet

Act five

Background In lines 1–23 of Act five, Scene 1, Theseus shows himself to be something of a realist—he does not believe the lovers' stories of fairies and enchantment. This is in stark contrast to the rest of the characters. Even his bride-to-be claims that the lovers' accounts are too similar to be simply imagined. Theseus speculates that the lover, madman, and poet have something in common.

Directions After reviewing some of the skepticism Theseus shows, consider your own thoughts about the supernatural. Write your answers to the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What is it that the lover, madman, and poet have in common (line 9)?

2. Theseus goes on to describe the common bond in more detail. Paraphrase what his description of each is saying about that person.

   a. The madman "sees more devils than vast hell can hold."

   b. The lover "sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt."

   c. The poet "doth glance from heaven to earth . . . and as imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."

(continued)



ACTIVITY 27

The Lunatic, the Lover, and the Poet (continued)

3. Do you believe in the supernatural (psychics, ghosts, aliens, and so forth)? Why or why not?

4. Television programs showcasing people who claim to be psychics or to be able to communicate with the dead are very popular. Similarly, movies about aliens generally are successful at the box office. Why do you think people are so fascinated by these topics?

5. The Shakespearean critic Peter Levi writes, “Most uneducated Elizabethans believed in fairies.” Would you *want* fairies to be real if they were of the sort Shakespeare presents in this play? Why or why not?

Student Name ______________________________ Date ______________



ACTIVITY 28

A Fitting End

Act five

Background Oberon, Titania, and Puck end the play—Oberon and Titania with a song of blessing upon the newlyweds and the children they will have, and Puck with a gentle apology for all of the silliness, magic, and mix-ups that have occurred during the play.

Directions Taking on the persona of any one character within the play besides Oberon, Titania, or Puck, write a poem ending the play from that character's perspective. Use either Shakespearean or modern-day language, but attempt the rhyme scheme that both Oberon and Puck's ending speeches have (aa, bb, cc, and so forth). Suggested length: at least 10 lines. Write your poem below.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 29

Create a Comic Strip

Act five

Background In Act five, the brides and grooms enter and a play is performed in celebration of the marriages. The play is performed with great gusto, and, at the end, everyone goes to bed and the fairies come to bless the marriages. Puck addresses the audience and asks for their friendship.

Directions Select the four or five most important events/lines/interactions from Act five and show them in comic strip form. The comic strip must have dialogue and narration appropriate for each event, line, or interaction; you must label the characters in each panel and color the comic strip. Make sure that the boxes of the comic strip, the dialogue, and pictures are big, colorful, and easy to see and read. Include the title of the play, and title your strip. Use the space below or another sheet of paper, if necessary.

(continued)

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



ACTIVITY 30
Review

Directions Choose the letter of the character who spoke the line. Write your answer on the line provided.

___ 1. "If we shadows have offended, think but this, and all is mended."
   a. Oberon
   b. Titania
   c. Peaseblossom
   d. Puck

___ 2. "For aught that I could ever read, could ever hear by tale or history, the course of true love never did run smooth."
   a. Theseus
   b. Lysander
   c. Demetrius
   d. Hermia

___ 3. "Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind."
   a. Hermia
   b. Helena
   c. Titania
   d. Demetrius

___ 4. "Over hill, over dale, thorough bush, thorough briar, over park over pale, thorough flood, thorough fire, I do wander every where."
   a. Puck
   b. Titania
   c. Fairy
   d. Mustardseed

___ 5. "Fetch me that flower, the herb I shewed thee once. The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid will make or man or woman madly dote on the next live creature that it sees."
   a. Titania
   b. Oberon
   c. Puck
   d. Hippolyta

___ 6. "How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak, how low am I? I am not yet so low but that my nails can reach unto thine eyes."
   a. Helena
   b. Titania
   c. Hippolyta
   d. Hermia

(continued)



ACTIVITY 30

Review *(continued)*

___ 7. "Do I entice you? Do I speak you fair? Or rather do I not in plainest truth tell you I do not nor I cannot love you?"

a. Oberon
b. Demetrius
c. Lysander
d. Puck

___ 8. "Methinks I have a great desire to a bottle of hay: good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow."

a. Bottom
b. Quince
c. Puck
d. Moth

___ 9. "What visions have I seen! Methought I was enamoured of an ass."

a. Quince
b. Hermia
c. Helena
d. Titania

___ 10. "I will hear that play. For never anything can be amiss when simpleness and duty tender it."

a. Egeus
b. Oberon
c. Theseus
d. Lysander

Student Name ______________________________ Date __________



A Midsummer Night's Dream Final Test

Directions: Read each statement. Then write true (T) or false (F) in the space provided.

___ 1. The entire play takes place over four days.

___ 2. The actors are afraid that the lion will frighten the ladies watching the play.

___ 3. Hermia is taller than Helena.

___ 4. Hermia and Lysander secretly marry at his aunt's house.

___ 5. Hippolyta is concerned that the actors will make fools of themselves.

___ 6. Bottom thinks that the donkey head/ Titania experience was a dream.

___ 7. Oberon is the last one in the play to speak.

___ 8. One of the actors plays the wall that separates Pyramus and Thisbe.

___ 9. Egeus believes that his daughter should face a consequence—even death—if she doesn't marry whom he chooses for her.

___ 10. Oberon and Titania showed jealousy over each other's infidelities.

Directions: Choose the letter of the best answer. Write it in the space provided.

___ 11. What does Oberon and Titania's fighting negatively affect on Earth?

a. the weather
b. lovers' relationships
c. worship of the gods
d. all of the above

___ 12. What is Puck's full name?

a. Puck Fairy
b. Robin Goodfellow
c. Quince Puck
d. Puck Peaseblossom

___ 13. Why does Helena become so upset with Hermia in the woods?

a. because Demetrius still loves Hermia
b. because Helena thinks Hermia is mocking her
c. because Oberon has made Helena mad at Hermia
d. none of the above

___ 14. How does Bottom end up having a donkey's head for awhile?

a. Oberon does it.
b. Puck does it.
c. Bottom only dreams it.
d. It is a prop for the play that he cannot remove.

(continued)

___ 15. Which of the following is NOT a part in the play the actors put on?

a. Wall
b. Moonshine
c. Lion
d. Tree

___ 16. Why does Oberon first get involved with the young lovers?

a. He pities Helena because he sees Demetrius treating her badly.
b. He gets involved to amuse himself while he waits for Puck.
c. He overhears Hermia wishing the gods would intervene.
d. He helps Helena and Hermia in order to make Titania jealous.

___ 17. What do the actors do after they have finished showing their play to the newlyweds?

a. They read the epilogue.
b. They leave.
c. They dance.
d. They keep bowing.

___ 18. At the beginning of the play, which young man loves Helena?

a. Demetrius
b. Lysander
c. Neither loves her.
d. Both love her.

___ 19. What happens to the young lovers in the actors' play?

a. They live happily ever after.
b. They adopt a lion who can talk.
c. They both kill themselves.
d. They get married.

___ 20. Who treats the lovers' stories of enchantment and fairies with much skepticism?

a. Egeus
b. Hippolyta
c. Peter Quince
d. Theseus

Student Name ______________________ Date __________



CULMINATING ACTIVITY 1

Midsummer *in Another Era*

Directions Lovers disobeying their parents and escaping to elope, love potions, partner-swapping—this play could have easily been set in the 1960s. Choose an era in which to set the play, choose the most important events from each act, and rewrite the play to suit that era. In groups of four or five, work on preparing a script and then learning your script so that you may perform for your class. Condense the original play to the most important events (and those that easily fit into your chosen era), and try to keep the performance time to eight minutes or less. Use the space below to take notes or write an outline.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



CULMINATING ACTIVITY 2

Was Shakespeare a Romantic or a Skeptic?

Directions Write a multi-paragraph essay exploring the theme of what Shakespeare was saying about love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Was Shakespeare a hopeless romantic (e.g., happy ending for all) or a cynical pessimist (e.g., the happy ending was due to a drug-forced love) who believed that true love didn't really exist? You decide, using support from the play. Use the space below to develop an outline. Suggested length: 3–5 pages

Student Name ______________________ Date __________



CULMINATING ACTIVITY 3

Create a Movie Poster or a Book Jacket

Directions Imagine that you are the graphic designer for either a movie poster or a book jacket to promote *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Incorporate one of the major events from the play and as many of the characters as possible into your design. Make the design enticing and colorful, so that anyone seeing it would feel compelled to read the book or see the movie. Make the print and design big and easy to read. Use the space below to sketch out your idea, but use posterboard for the final product.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



CULMINATING ACTIVITY 4

Pyramus and Thisbe *Enacted*

Directions You may have noticed that *Pyramus and Thisbe,* the play within a play, is similar to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.* Two young, star-crossed lovers take their lives. Because of Nick Bottom, Peter Quince, and the rest of the rag-tag actors, however, the play is more comical than tragic. As a class, enact the play as the commoners did, being sure to include Lion, Moonshine, The Wall, and so forth as characters in your play. You may want to consider keeping Theseus and the other characters watching the play within a play as they discuss the shortcomings of the sincere but not-so-bright actors.

Student Name ______________________________ Date ____________



CULMINATING ACTIVITY 5

Dream Analysis

Directions The lines between the dream world and the real world are repeatedly blurred in this play, and Shakespeare seemed to have intended it to be so. Choose an episode that either is a dream or is thought to be a dream by the characters. Then, consult a dream analysis resource (on the Internet, in a book, and so forth). Look at the colors, events, dialogue, and so forth and see what they might symbolize. Write your analysis in essay form, drawing it back to what you see as the central theme of the play. How does your analysis of this dream display the theme? Write your analysis below.

Student Name ______________________ Date __________



CULMINATING ACTIVITY 6

Set It to Music

Directions There is definitely a caste or social class system in this play. For simplicity's sake, they can be divided into the following classes:

A. young lovers

B. Theseus and Hippolyta (royalty of the mortals)

C. the common actors

D. Oberon and Titania (royalty of the fairies)

E. Puck and the rest of the fairies

Students should work in groups of no more than four for this activity, and one student in each group must have access to a CD burner. Choose a song that represents each of these classes of characters. Burn no more than one minute of each of the five songs onto a CD, and prepare an articulate explanation of why each song is a good representation of the characters and their experiences in the play. Play your songs and explain to the class why you chose the music that you did, referring to the play and its events to clarify your choices. Keep your presentation to five minutes or less. You may need another sheet of paper for your explanations.

Activity 1

Answers will vary.

Activity 2

Answers will vary.

Activity 3

Answers will vary slightly.

Theseus: He won Hippolyta by conquering her, but he wants their wedding to be beautiful and elegant. He seems to take a sensible, though somewhat patriarchal, view of love.

Egeus: To Egeus, love is all about ownership: He thinks he owns Hermia, and is he willing to give her only to a man she doesn't love or make her suffer the consequences for disobeying him.

Lysander: He acknowledges that the path of love is rarely smooth and uncomplicated, yet he seems more than willing to fight for his love for Hermia.

Helena: Poor Helena seems caught up in all of love's shortcomings: Love can and will make some people fickle and rash. She has experienced this with Demetrius, who once loved her, but now loves Hermia. She thinks love is shallow and based on appearances.

Activity 4

Answers will vary.

Activity 5

1. c
2. b
3. c
4. b
5. b
6. a
7. T
8. a
9. d
10. T

Activity 6

Answers will vary.

Activity 7

Descriptions and pictures will vary.

Puck is a mischievous fairy who enjoys playing practical jokes on humans and animals. He is infamous for his pranks.

Activity 8

Answers will vary; the following is a guideline.

Imagery: "rushy brook" appeals to hearing (line 84), "whistling wind" appeals to hearing (line 86), "winds, piping to us in vain" appeals to hearing (line 88), "Hiem's thin and icy crown" appeals to touch (line 109).

Alliteration: "sweet summer buds" (line 110), "whistling wind" (line 86)
Assonance: "ringlets/ whistling wind" (line 86), "filled up with mud" (line 98)

Personification: "Therefore the moon, the governess of floods, pale in her anger, washes all the air" (lines 103–105), "The spring, the summer, the childing autumn, angry winter, change their wonted liveries" (lines 111–113).

Activity 9

1. They are fighting about Titania's boy; Oberon wants him for his own, and Titania refuses to give him to Oberon because she was close to his mother, who died delivering him.
2. Negative effects
   a. Effect 1: There has been massive flooding, which negatively affects the crops and causes diseases (because of the standing water), among other things.
   b. Effect 2: Humans are overwrought with disaster, and are not enjoying Christmas or the joy that winter can bring.
   c. Effect 3: Disease is rampant amongst humans and beasts.
   d. Effect 4: The seasons are all mixed up.

Activity 10

1. h
2. j
3. c
4. g
5. i
6. f
7. i
8. d
9. e
10. a
11. b
12. k
13. d
14. b
15. j

Activity 11

Answers may vary slightly.

1. Fairies fly.
2. Fairies have trains of servants.
3. There are tiny little fairies who hide in acorn cups.
4. Some fairies are mischievous and like to have a good time.
5. Fairies interfere with humans, even having affairs with them.
6. Fairies are jealous.
7. Fairies take mortal companions at times and feel loyalty to them.
8. Fairies are petty at times, not above seeking vengeance for a perceived wrong.
9. Fairies are fast.
10. Titania sleeps in the discarded skin of snakes, after dances and revelry.

Activity 12

Answers will vary.

Activity 13

Answers will vary, as this exercise asks for students' opinions.

Activity 14

Answers will vary.

Activity 15

1. F
2. T
3. F
4. T
5. F
6. T
7. F
8. T
9. F
10. T
11. F
12. T
13. T
14. T
15. F

Activity 16

Answers may vary.

A. 1. He calls a lion a fowl (which is a bird) when he means to say beast.

2. He thinks that they need to look in the almanac to determine when the moon is shining when the moon shines every night.
3. Odious means hateful. He means to say odiferous.
4. He thinks the nature-named fairies are related to vegetables.

B. Answers will vary.

Activity 17

Answers will vary.

Activity 18

Answers will vary.

Activity 19

Step 1: He directs Puck to make the night very dark and cloudy so Demetrius and Lysander have difficulty seeing where they are going.

Step 2: He directs Puck to misdirect Demetrius and Lysander so they cannot find each other.

Step 3: He directs Puck to sound like Demetrius and Lysander and provoke the other using their voices.

Step 4: He directs Puck to make them sleepy, then put the love juice antidote in Lysander's eye. When they awake, all this will seem like a dream.

Step 5: They will go back to Athens and wed.

Step 6: Oberon will take the boy from Titania and release her from her spell.

Activity 20

1. a	6. b	11. b
2. b	7. a	12. d
3. b	8. g	13. c
4. a	9. a	14. h
5. a	10. f	15. e

Activity 21

Answers will vary.

Activity 22

Answers may vary, but the following may serve as a guideline.

1. The donkey may symbolize the baseness and vulgar nature of plebeians like Nick Bottom. It is also a play on Nick's last name (bottom/ass) and a sexual reference.
2. The forest may symbolize mystery, enchantment, dreams, and free nature.
3. Athens may represent the constraints of civilized society—the antithesis of the forest.
4. The play within a play represents comedy and tragedy intertwined. It parallels what is occurring with the lovers—the confusion and heartbreak could have ruined their lives, as it did for Pyramus and Thisbe. Instead, it all works out, and the lovers live happily ever after.
5. Night may represent the fairy world—when their magic is given free rein. It may also represent the darkness of the fairy world—how their interference with the mortal world verges on evil.
6. The hunt may represent human's desire for control and power.

7. Puck represents the mischievous nature of fairies.
8. The fairies may represent powers humans desire but do not possess (the ability to fly, to perform magic, and so forth). Fairies represent mystery, darkness, and desire, but also beauty and enchantment.
9. Marriage represents the ultimate union and happy ending—also the consummation of the desire that has built throughout the play.
10. Sleep and dreams may represent fantasies and unbridled desire as well as mystery and confusion.

Activity 23

Answers will vary.

Activity 24

Answers will vary.

Activity 25

1. 10	6. 4
2. 6	7. 9
3. 5	8. 3
4. 2	9. 7
5. 8	10. 1

Activity 26

Letters will vary.

Activity 27

Answers may vary, but the following may serve as a guide.

1. They all have rich (over-active, perhaps) imaginations.
2. a. The madman is possessed; his imagination holds dominion over him and turns his life into a torment.

   b. The lover sees beauty everywhere, even where others would not see it.

   c. The poet turns the abstract into the concrete, capturing in words what others can barely imagine.

3–5. Answers will vary.

Activity 28

Answers will vary.

Activity 29

Answers will vary.

Activity 30

1. d	6. d
2. b	7. b
3. b	8. a
4. c	9. d
5. b	10. c

Final Test

1. T	11. a
2. T	12. b
3. F	13. b
4. F	14. b
5. T	15. d
6. T	16. a
7. F	17. c
8. T	18. c
9. T	19. c
10. T	20. d

Culminating Activity 1

Answers will vary, but the following may serve as a guideline for grading.

- Students were not overly tied to scripts (practiced enough).
- Demonstrated understanding of play; didn't misinterpret lines or events
- Everyone in group participated in some way in the presentation.
- Kept performance within time guideline
- Energetic and enthusiastic performance: spoke loud enough for everyone to hear
- Good job of attempting to incorporate and portray different era

Culminating Activity 2

Answers will vary, but the following may serve as a guideline for grading.

- Strong thesis which remained focus for entire paper
- Utilized textual support
- Stayed within length guidelines
- Properly attributed quotations from play
- Demonstrated understanding of text
- Thesis well supported
- Spelling and punctuation

Culminating Activity 3

Posters will vary. Here are some possible grading guidelines.

- Colorful
- Easy-to-read
- Incorporated title
- Represented book and events appropriately

Culminating Activity 4

Performances will vary.

Culminating Activity 5

Dream analyses will vary.

Culminating Activity 6

CD presentations will vary, but the following may serve as a guideline for grading.

- Stayed within time guideline
- Had clear and adequate explanation of why music fit characters and their situations
- Presentation involved all group members
- Clear, energetic, and enthusiastic and presentation
- Showed understanding of text

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